



E22 Bloodstain Evidence of Trophy Taking in a Homicide

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The goal of this presentation is to describe unusual bloodstains generated by the assailant manipulation of the dying victim of a shooting.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by helping attendees be able to recognize unusual bloodstains, albeit likely quite a rare occurrence.

The homicide of Daniel Lyons occurred in Santa Barbara, CA, May 4, 2009, in the early hours of the morning. Lyons was awakened by the sound of shots being fired at his wife on the first floor of their home. Lyons was in a bedroom on the second floor. Quickly following his wife's murder, an assailant was in his bedroom and fired two shots with a .38 caliber revolver. A second shooter with a 12-gauge shotgun then joined the first assailant. As the room was dark, neither shooter could effectively target Lyons and deliver an immediately fatal shot; most shots missed. Five .38 caliber and four shotgun discharges occurred. Following the shooting, Lyons was still standing despite a .38 bullet wound to his head and shotgun wounds to his abdomen and right hand. Remarkably, after being severely wounded, bloodstains on his body and on the carpet show Lyons struggled with one or more of his attackers, being twice stuck on his head, likely by a hatchet.

The physical struggle between Daniel Lyons and his assailants ended when he lost consciousness, due either to the bullet wound to his head or to the loss of blood from the shotgun wounds to his abdomen and right hand. It was at this time that the assailants repositioned his face-up, naked body. But the manipulation of his body did not stop with Lyons' final position at the scene. It appeared a cloth (pillow case?) was placed over Lyons' abdomen to his lower thighs and was tucked between his legs. Lyons' still-bleeding right hand was placed on the cloth and repositioned several times, soaking the cloth with blood at each location. The assailants took the cloth, but evidence was left on the victim's body of this unusual activity.

To validate this scenario, a mannequin was draped with cotton fabric. Simulated blood was poured over the cloth.¹ The simulated bloodied cloth was removed and the stains left on the mannequin were compared to the bloodstains on the body of Lyons. There were a variety of bloodstain patterns on the anterior body that appeared to have been created by the covering cloth, ranging from a heavy coating of blood over the mid right thigh to sparsely distributed blood on the upper right thigh. In the sparsely bloodied areas on the body, blood that had penetrated cloth also left patterns on the skin somewhat reflective of the cloth's folds as well as highly irregular-shaped stains of different sizes. Distinctive multiple blood streams on the right side of the body occurred from the edge of the cloth on the anterior body to the floor. Most of the bloodstains on Lyons' body were simulated on the mannequin by the cloth soaked with the fake blood.

It is apparent from the covering of the body with a cloth and purposely bloodying it as well as taking it from the crime scene that the assailants were in no hurry to flee the crime scene after the homicides. It is likely that at least one of the assailants was a street gang member who took the bloodied cloth with him as a "trophy" upon leaving the crime scene.

Reference(s):

1. <http://www.halloweenforum.com/party-ideas-experiences-recipes/85121-forensic-investigations/>. *Fake Blood Recipe 8*.
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Bloodstains, Homicide, Trophy Taking